

Definition of Un-served and Underserved: MHSA Innovative Programs

Members of the Innovation Committee agreed that many people in California are un-served, under-served, and inappropriately served by the existing mental health system; the Committee's vision is to bring innovation to everyone in California who can benefit from outstanding mental health services. Committee members diverged as to whether or not in the first round of funding for Innovative Programs the definition of underserved should focus on groups that data indicate are historically and currently especially underserved. The Committee identified the following two options for the OAC to consider:

- a) The definition of "underserved" in the first round of Innovation funding should focus on four of the historically under-served groups: African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Native Americans. OR
- b) The definition of "underserved" should be determined by each county through its representative stakeholder process, to reflect the county's needs, priorities and history.

At its July 2007 meeting, Commissioners requested that staff write a definition that integrates the two perspectives, and that adds gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning individuals to the groups identified as historically under-served priority populations. The following is a proposed integrated definition, for consideration:

The definition of "underserved" should be determined by each county through its representative stakeholder process and through objective data, to reflect the county's needs, priorities and history. The county shall include in its assessment a specific inquiry as to the prevalence of historically underserved individuals and shall include these groups in its definition of underserved, unless data indicate that they are not in fact underserved in the county.